

Tree management in London boroughs

Results of the 2016 LTOA survey looking at the changing face of tree management in response to central government austerity



The London Tree Officers Association
www.ltoa.org.uk

Executive Summary

In 2016, the London Tree Officers Association (LTOA) sought to gain an understanding of the impacts of reductions in government funding to local authorities on the delivery of tree services in London boroughs. Principal Tree Officers in 19 of the 33 London Boroughs responded to the survey with information about the current situation; changes within the previous 5 years; anticipated changes; and their thoughts about how local authority tree services should adapt in response to financial changes.

The report identified:

- Considerable variation between boroughs as to current numbers of tree officers, their range of responsibilities, and how the service was organised.
- 61% of boroughs (that responded to the survey) reported budget cuts to their tree services within the 5 years preceding 2016. Substantial staff losses and structural changes were also reported, with 5 London boroughs noting that outsourcing of tree services outside of councils is a reality.
- The majority of boroughs that responded expected some form of future budget reduction. Significant future changes were also expected with regard to outsourcing, reductions in staff and amalgamation with other boroughs.
- These future changes were likely to impact in differing ways on community engagement; service delivery; ways of working; resources; maintaining quality of tree care; alternative sources of funding; staff morale and stress levels.
- A number of ideas about reviewing current provision; promoting the importance of trees; and bolstering budgets which may be worth considering whichever service delivery mechanism is used.

Also included are four case studies demonstrating examples of a traditional 'in-house' model and various forms of outsourcing in operation at the time the report was written.

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The 2008 financial crisis has brought a long period of austerity to local government finances. Between 2010–11 and 2015–16 total Government funding to London boroughs fell by 43.2% (National Audit Office, 2016). It has become apparent that local authorities have responded to reduced levels of funding in a number of ways, depending upon local priorities.
- 1.2 Local Authorities have responsibilities for both trees that they own/maintain ('client departments' e.g. highways, parks, etc) and also in the context of planning legislation (e.g. tree preservation orders, planning applications, etc). The London Tree Officers Association (LTOA) became aware from tree officers that the changes were having an impact on Local Authority tree services. This is with regard to reduced budgets, reduced numbers of staff and changes to management structures. In order to assess the extent of this impact and gain a picture of what was happening to tree services across London in 2016, the LTOA established a working party to look at tree service models.
- 1.3 The tree service models working party consisted of five members:
- Becky Porter, LTOA Executive Officer.
 - Ann Currell, Principal Planner - Trees and Environment, London Borough of Barnet/Regional Enterprise.
 - Julian Fowgies, Arboricultural Manager, London Borough of Bromley.
 - Richard Fletcher, Arboricultural Officer, Planning & Tree Preservation Orders, London Borough of Wandsworth/Enable Leisure & Culture. *Photo credit: front cover, pages 15, 22 and 27.*
 - Al Smith, Arboricultural Manager, London Borough of Camden. *Photo credit: page 3.*
- Additional photo credit: Jackie Baxter, page 24.*
- 1.4 A questionnaire was put together by the working party and five questions were devised to gain relevant information that could then be analysed. The questionnaire was sent to principal tree officers in the 33 London Boroughs, with answers received during February-June 2016.
- 1.5 The questionnaire consisted of the following questions:
1. *Where are you now?*
 2. *What has happened in the last 5 years?*
 3. *What do you anticipate will happen in the future?*
 4. *What do you anticipate will be the overall outcome of future changes?*
 5. *How do you think Local Authority tree services should adapt in response to financial changes?*
- 1.6 Of the 33 London boroughs that were sent the questionnaire, 19 responded (just over 58%), with no response from 14 Boroughs.

- 1.7 The answers were analysed by the working party; what follows in this report is a summary of that analysis. It was found that in a number of boroughs, the management structures for tree services were undergoing very substantial changes, including Council mergers and the sharing of services. Four case studies have been included to demonstrate how tree services are being managed differently and to provide details of how existing management structures have changed or been replaced in response to the changing times. This includes examples of tree departments outsourced from the Council, in varying forms, and a more traditional model based on an established management structure.
- 1.8 It is evident from the results of the 2016 tree service models survey involving London tree officers that there have been a variety of responses from Local Authorities to the impacts of austerity.



Figure 1. – Map of London Boroughs.

- 1.9 In 2017, during the course of the preparation of this report, the Arboricultural Association published the results of its own survey based on 163 responses from tree officers of the 418 principal councils in the UK. Their key findings were that:
- 83% of tree officers considered that ongoing austerity measures had adversely affected their ability to do their job well.
 - 72% felt that a combination of reduced staff capacity and reduced support functions such as administration and enforcement had the greatest effect on this negative impact.

- Tree officers were also concerned that reduced budgets for training and continued professional development (CPD) were having a detrimental effect on their ability to carry out their work effectively.

The LTOA survey asked more detailed questions of London tree officers but, as may be seen, there is an echo in the findings.

- 1.10 One of the roles of the LTOA is to act as a discussion forum for tree officers, and to disseminate best practice in arboriculture. This survey provides a snapshot of the way in which London boroughs are managing the financial pressures being placed upon them. It shows that whilst many boroughs are continuing to provide tree services according to the traditional Council model, a number of Boroughs are remodelling their services to provide new ways of working. As local services change, it remains to be seen how successful the differing models will be at providing these services, and if new models are to become more widely adopted across London. It is expected that austerity will have an ongoing impact upon local government funding. The analysis, conclusions and case studies that follow should help to provide a picture of these responses for decision makers to gain an understanding of the changing face of tree services in the capital. The information is capable of more general adoption and has potential to encourage further wide ranging discussion across the country.

2 The situation in 2016

Where are you now?

Describe how your borough's tree services are structured and function, across which departments. Please include:

- *How many officers in each department?*
- *How many admin staff?*
- *Client departments like housing, highways, schools;*
- *Which functions are managed in house or have been outsourced or other variations?*
- *Is the tree manager the budget holder?*

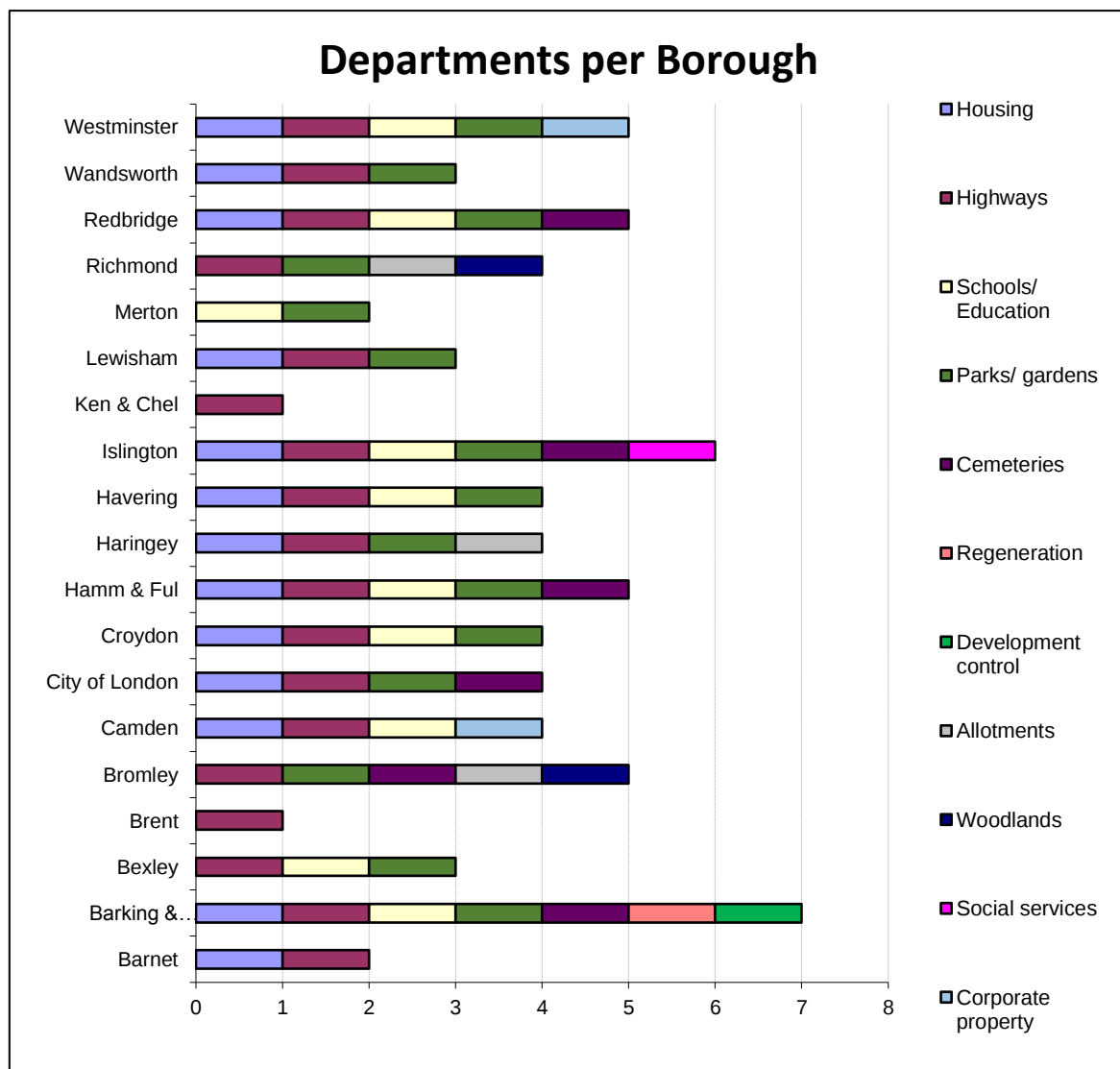


Figure 2. – Allocation of Client Departments i.e. council owned and maintained trees per Borough.

- 2.1 For client departments i.e. council owned and maintained trees we found the majority of Boroughs that returned the survey most managed highways trees (94%), and parks and gardens with 84%, then housing close behind with 68%, followed by schools/education trees at 53% and cemeteries 31%.

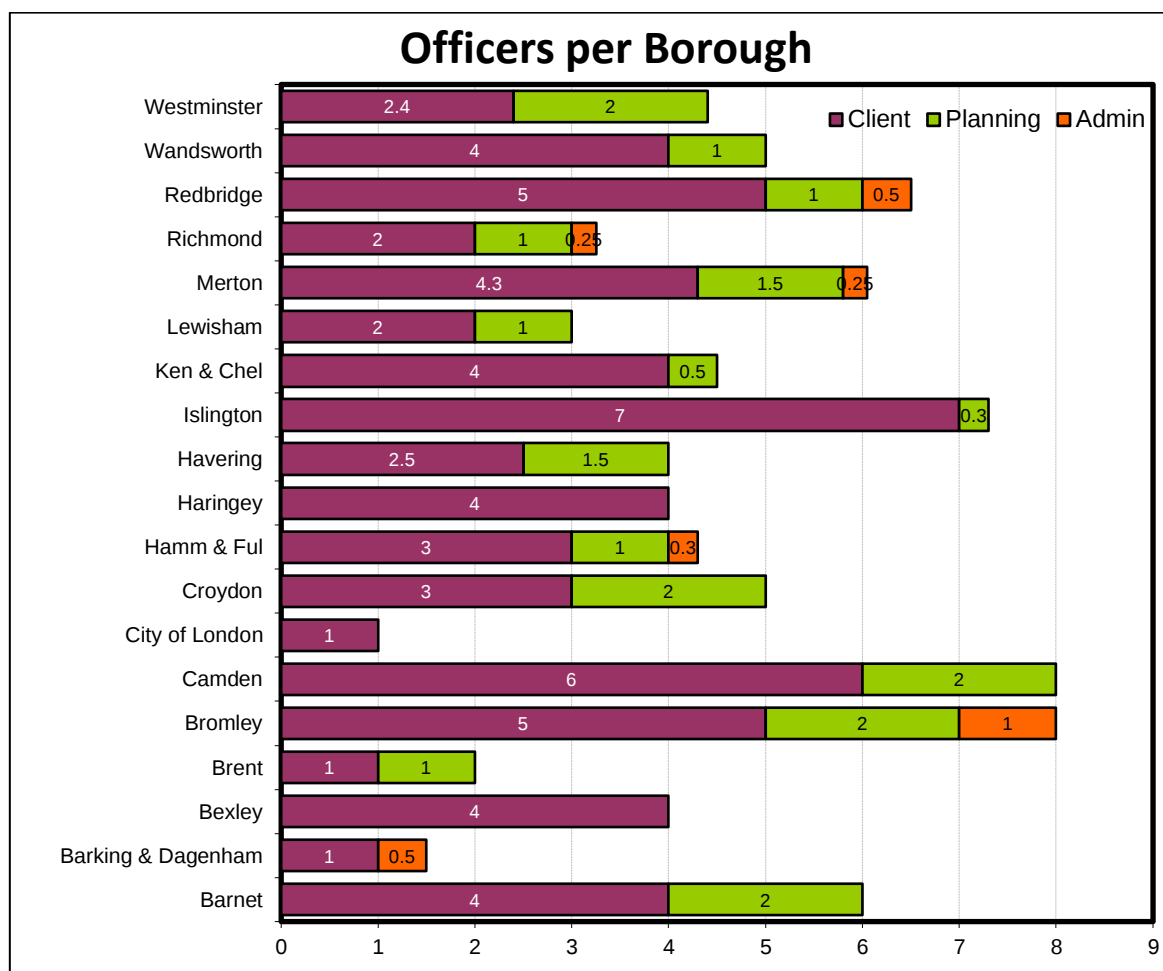


Figure 3. –Number of Tree Officers per Borough.

- 2.2 The highest number of client tree officers in a borough was seven; the lowest was one. The average was 3.38 officers. On average there are 1.04 planning tree officers in each borough. Only six out of the 19 boroughs who responded had any administration staff and on average this constituted 0.15 of a post.
- 2.3 Of the 5 boroughs who have some form of outsourcing; in one the planning section has been outsourced, in two tree inspections, in another parks and cemeteries and another one the whole tree section.
- 2.4 In 32% of the boroughs who responded the tree manager is the budget holder, others hold some budgets for some departments and 21% do not hold the budget.

Conclusions

- 2.5 It is difficult to make comparisons because of the difference between geographical size of boroughs and quantity of tree stock. The number of officers varied markedly between boroughs with some as little as 1 and others as many as 7, although the range of functions varied within boroughs. The majority had no dedicated administrative support. At the time of this survey, outsourcing had become a reality.

3 Changes

The five years preceding 2016

What has happened in the last five years?

Briefly identify cuts in budgets, cuts in staff, major changes in structure etc.



Figure 4. – Borough experience of the last five years (%).

Budget cuts

- 3.1 As illustrated in Figure 4, it can be seen that the vast majority of borough tree services were subject to cuts to their budgets. Further analysis reveals significant levels in variation in reductions in this area from 5-50%.

Staff losses

- 3.2 Almost half of respondents reported staff losses within their service areas. This would seem to be consistent with Local Authorities' general response to austerity in cutting wage bills from services across the board. The most common reduction to staff levels in tree services being one full time equivalent (FTE).

Structural changes

- 3.3 The majority of respondents reported structural changes had taken place to their service. Structural changes included the following:
- Internal/departmental restructures.
 - Transfer of service(s) to private sector.
 - Transfer of service(s) to trust organisation.

Outsourcing

- 3.4 Outsourcing of some or all tree functions was reported by some respondents, however, it should be noted that several authorities that are known to have outsourced their tree services did not respond to the questionnaire.

Seeking external funding

- 3.5 Just over a third of responders confirmed that they had sought and/or were continuing to seek external sources of funding. Some tree services reported an increase in providing internal consultancy services within their organisation, often triggered by a departmental restructure.
- 3.6 Selling services to external customers was also reported as a necessary income stream used to address reductions in base budgets. The most common area where external funding was required was to facilitate tree planting programmes.

Conclusions

- 3.7 The following conclusions can be taken from analysing the responses to this question:
- A simple analysis of the answers received indicates a set of common responses where changes were made following the reduction in central government grants - through budget reductions, staff losses and structural changes.
 - The results also indicate a significant trend towards the seeking of external funding as a result of reduction in budgets and/or structural changes.
 - Taking in to account the low level of responses by boroughs known to have moved in part or whole towards outsourcing, the overall number of Local Authorities which have moved in this direction thus far is relatively few.
 - It should be noted however that many boroughs are exploring or preparing for outsourcing programmes within the next few years when existing contracts expire.

3 Changes

Anticipated changes

What do you anticipate will happen in the future?

Outsourcing to private company or other body or joint venture, staff mutual or charity etc.

- 3.8 In addition to any previous outsourcing of staff/departments, 26% of boroughs indicated they anticipate this would happen in some form in the future. Of the boroughs that did not see this as being likely to happen, comments did include reference to future uncertainty, including: restructuring; further cuts and outsourcing being a possibility.

Amalgamation with other boroughs

- 3.9 Figure 5 (below) illustrates responses regarding expectations of boroughs or their services merging with one another.

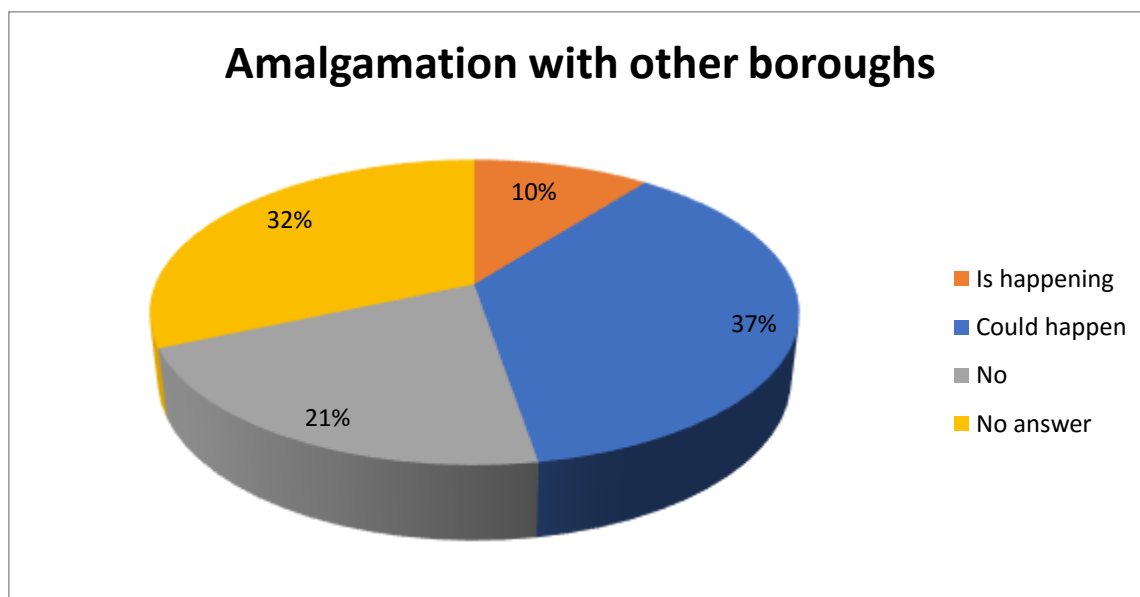


Figure 5. – Expectation of Borough amalgamation (%).

Retain or bring services back in house/any other variations

- 3.10 The overwhelming majority of responses did not see this as being likely to happen. The responses received suggested it was more likely that some form of internal restructuring would take place. An innovation from one council was that they would retain services in-house and would increase income by providing services for other bodies. Another council faces losing responsibility for managing trees in schools across their borough.

Reduction in staff

- 3.11 One third of boroughs envisaged potential reductions in staff. This included reference to a retired post not expected to be filled, the loss of an administrator supporting a tree officer and a feasibility study being commissioned to assess the issue.

Reduction in budgets

3.12 A majority of boroughs reported that they expected future reductions in budgets to happen in some form (Figure 6). Specific areas of concern were highlighted, indicating how cuts could impact upon the practical management of council trees:

- *“The biggest impact to the visual tree presence is replacement planting, stump grinding and maintenance pruning.”*
- *“The tree planting budget will not be reinstated - the highways street scene will start to rapidly decline.”*
- *“Ongoing monitoring of emerging pests and pathogens is recognised as a significant risk for the service.”*

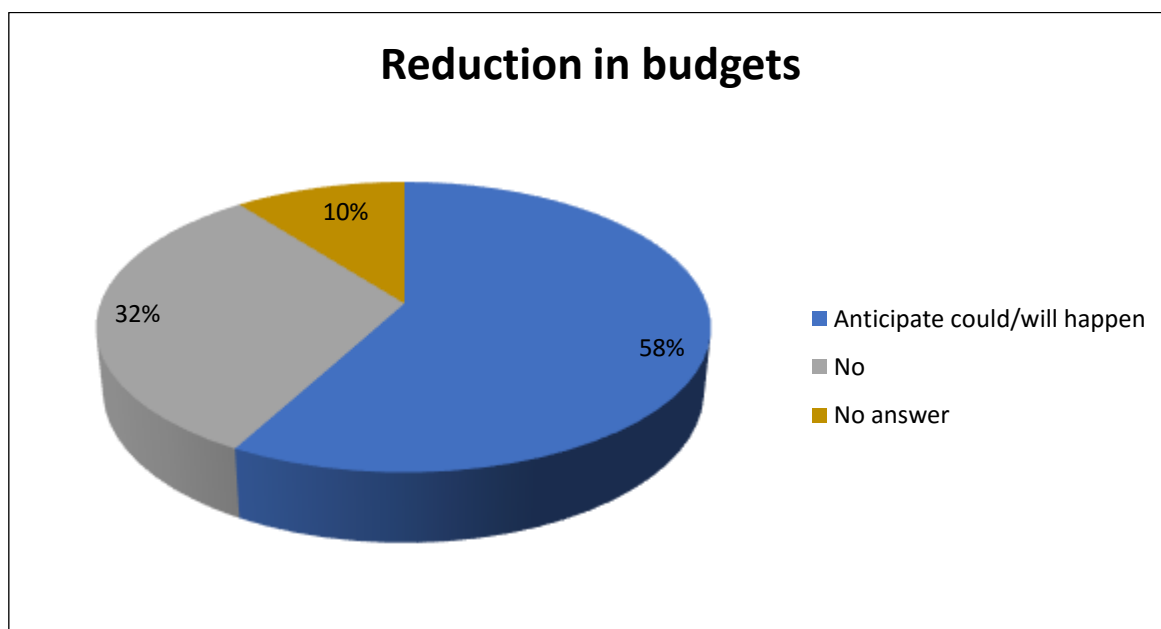


Figure 6. – Reduction in tree services budgets (%).

Conclusions

3.13 Responses show that significant changes are anticipated for tree services in the future:

- One quarter of those who responded expected some form of outsourcing to their tree service.
- More than one third expected amalgamation with other boroughs.
- Bringing tree services back in house was seen as generally unlikely.
- One third saw potential reductions in staff to come.
- The majority of those who responded expected some form of future budget reduction and examples were given as to the likely impact of this, including concern for the loss of tree planting.

3 Changes

Implications/outcomes

What do you anticipate will be the overall outcome of future changes?

- *Changes in quality of tree care*
- *Impact on customer service*
- *Engagement with communities*
- *Tree population numbers and natural environment*
- *Effects on policy and decision making*
- *Changes in funding*

Responses

3.14 Responses from participants have been divided into 'positive', 'neutral' and 'negative' as per the following quotes:

Positive:

- *"Street tree numbers are slowly climbing by 1% per annum."*
- *"Improved delivery of service through more robust policy and strategy."*
- *"Increased tree numbers through planting, more strategic approach to involve the community, citizen science etc. Seeking out capital and grant funding for planting."*
- *"Will ensure quality does not suffer, we are achieving good quality on a contract which is 70% price 30% quality so cannot foresee much change unless budget is squeezed."*
- *"Improved ways of working with the tree contractor, to make the operational side more efficient and effective."*

Neutral:

- *"Continuing to focus on protecting front line services, including tree care, to an acceptable standard."*
- *"Do not envisage significant changes in this area."*

Negative:

- *"Wholly dependent on adequacy of resource."*
- *"Reduction in pruning cycles explored and implemented where possible."*
- *"The lack of staff means reduced time to intervene, be involved in and contribute to wider matters in which trees are affected."*
- *"Almost certain drop in quality of tree care."*
- *"It will be increasingly difficult to maintain technical standards, drive for lower costs will increasingly turn public sector tree maintenance into factory, one size fits all, pruning."*
- *"Monitoring quality will be severely reduced leading to poor outcomes."*
- *"Tree population will most likely decrease even with inroads made by utilising S106 budgets."*
- *"Parks don't have sufficient budget to allow for new tree planting or to maintain current tree stock in a proactive manner."*

- “Over the last five years all of the above have slowly declined along with morale and I fear it will continue.”

Conclusions

- 3.15 The answers from boroughs are classified in positive (five responses), negative (nine responses) and neutral (two responses). There were no answers to this question from two boroughs.
- 3.16 Engagement of communities had a fairly high positive value, however the respondees are worried with reference to the negative impacts on services and the quality of tree care.
- 3.17 Many tree sections are constantly looking at improved ways of working to overcome the challenges. One of the main worries is the inadequacy of resources. Other issues are:
- More inventive ways for funding tree planting and care are required.
 - Staff morale and stress levels as tree officers take on more work.
 - One interesting quote was that “*trees are perceived as throw away street furniture*”.



4 Facing the challenges

How do you think Local Authority tree services should adapt in response to financial changes?

4.1 There do not appear to be any 'universal themes'; this may reflect in part the diversity of ways in which tree services are structured and managed. However, the following ideas for promoting trees and getting more income may be worth considering whichever service delivery model is used:

4.2 Review current model

- Have a vision for the future of the service and make the case for improvements.
- Review efficiency of current model and make changes prior to outsourcing processes.
- Prepare and plan for the worst.
- Look at the challenge as an opportunity to shake everything up - change is not necessarily a bad thing.
- Identify which elements can be outsourced without affecting the core tree management.
- Focus on making circumstances work – identify potential savings and benefits and develop strategic improvements.
- Be clear about the roles tree officers need to undertake and, importantly, those tree officers do not.
- Understand that the private sector will inevitably be offering to take over elements of the service and the need to specialise in areas that the private sector could not compete financially or provide the necessary expertise (for example in the creation of policy and strategy).
- We need to be clear about the roles we need to undertake and, just as important, those we don't need to. I think we have to concentrate on the bigger issues where tree officers' input is cost effective and devolve much of the day-to-day delivery to the private sector.
- Make the case for writing a tree strategy prior to any negotiations relating to outsourcing.
- Recognise trends and decide what can/cannot be sensibly adopted.
- Demonstrate resilience to senior staff to help further raise profile.
- Local Authorities join together to provide a more dynamic workforce whilst retaining specialism and local knowledge.

4.3 Bolster budgets

- Base discussions about budgets on risk.
- Highlight that the tree budget is only a tiny proportion of an overall council budget.
- Strive to maintain present budgets, ring fence future funding streams.
- Look at the removal of long term contracts in favour of framework agreements to give flexibility - grouping and separating work, having diverse contractors from one-man band to middle size.
- Ensure all budget holders aware of their responsibilities and defend/pressure wisely.
- Promote common sense in spending.
- Be inventive in how budgets are formed through alternative means other than revenue.

- Need to cover maintenance through CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) if possible.
- Use CAVAT (Capital Asset Valuation of Amenity Trees) valuation of trees lost for development to fund public planting.
- Seek grants to support ailing funds.
- Explore selling services.
- Obtain more work to replace that which is lost.
- Ensure clients are happy and work closely with them to see if tree input can be expanded into something unrelated e.g. Highway repair contractor using for other civil engineering projects.
- When reviewing service level agreements (SLAs), seek opportunities to charge for arboricultural reports e.g. method statements for school extensions.
- Offer investigations such as PICUS as a separate service and income stream.
- Work with legal and insurance to be a broker for resident tree work, taking a fee.
- Offer NHS hospitals competitive tree inspection and maintenance service.

4.4 Promote importance of trees

- Emphasise the importance of trees and tree officers to residents and Members.
- Highlight to senior staff that some aspects of tree management are statutory duties.
- Keep a good profile with internal peers and support them.
- Build relationships outside of the service area; avoid a silo or siege mentality.
- Continue to share knowledge and experiences of changes being made in other boroughs.
- Develop relationships with senior staff, Councillors/Members, other sections of the authority and community groups and societies and in turn create a positive reputation. There are plenty of ways to embed trees into the various political and social priorities; it's simply a matter of finding out what these priorities are in the first place and jumping on the bandwagon.
- Educate as to the national importance of the urban forest and the need to manage and enhance it for the public good.

5 Key findings and next steps

5.1 Analysis of the 19 responses to the questionnaire sent to tree officers in London boroughs in 2016 found no uniformity between Local Authorities. Whilst the report includes conclusions (where possible) at the end of the findings for each of the five questions, the following may be noted:

- There was considerable variation between the number of tree officers; their ranges of responsibilities; the type and extent of outsourcing; and budget holding between the respondent Boroughs.
- Changes to central government grants had already resulted in substantial budget reductions, staff losses, and structural changes – a significant trend towards the seeking of external funding was also indicated.
- Significant changes were anticipated for tree services in the future with outsourcing, amalgamation with other boroughs, staff reductions and budget reductions being envisaged.
- The anticipated overall impacts of future changes were classified as positive/negative/neutral - the main issues arising were:
 - engagement of communities;
 - concerns about negative impact on services;
 - improving ways of working;
 - inadequacy of resources;
 - maintaining quality of tree care;
 - more inventive ways for funding;
 - staff morale and stress levels.
- There did not appear to be any 'universal themes' to responses about how services should adapt - but several ideas about reviewing the current provision; for promoting the importance of trees; and bolstering budgets may be worth considering whichever service delivery model is used.

5.2 In the face of constantly evolving circumstances, a report can only represent a single snapshot in a time of ongoing changes. However, the working party considers that:

- Although "everyone does it differently", some ideas for reviewing current service delivery; promoting trees; and getting more income can easily be transferred between local authorities.
- It would be useful to expand the survey to a wider geographical area.
- To be of maximum benefit, data needs to be kept under review and impacts monitored in the longer term.

5.3 To this end, it would be useful for this single snapshot to form the baseline for further surveys and analysis into the future. It is therefore hoped to:

- Adapt the questionnaire for more widespread surveying using the national Tree Officer Groups network.

- Undertake future repeat surveys to chart changes/trends.
- Review and monitor to identify any apparent advantages and disadvantages of the various service delivery model(s) as time progresses.
- Work with other organisations to increase understanding of the changing face of delivering tree services.

Appendix I. Case studies

CASE STUDY A: 'Traditional' in-house tree service

Introduction

The following, what might be called a 'traditional' tree section model, has been compiled from the experiences of two London borough tree sections and has been in operation across London for decades. The traditional model essentially consists of an in-house client function with an outsourced tree planting and maintenance function.

Internal client function

Management of council-owned trees:

The average number of tree officers reporting to the tree manager in the two boroughs is eight. They have limited, or no administrative support. The tree officers carry out the following tasks:

- Responsible for the council's tree policy and strategy.
- Responsible for the council's tree asset management database.
- Tree budget management.
- Putting internal service level agreements in place to provide a baseline and structure to the service the model provides.
- Organising and selecting species for the annual tree planting programme.
- Carrying out tree inspection for the annual maintenance programme, including tree removals across housing, parks, education and street trees.
- Monitoring the council's tree population species diversity, and managing diversity through the annual tree planting programme.
- Raising the relevant works orders to be issued to the tree contractor.
- Providing technical reports to the insurance and housing surveyor departments in relation to tree-related subsidence and incidents.
- Monitoring tree-related subsidence claim history, which influences tree management regimes in risk mitigation.
- Investigating tree decay with either PICUS tomograph or resistograph equipment.
- providing technical advice to internal clients.
- Responding to enquiries from Ward Councillors and Members of Parliament.
- Dealing with ad hoc enquiries from the public.
- Liaising with the council's call centre to maximise resident call resolution.
- Tree database management.
- Monitoring public enquiry flow via the tree database, influencing efficient enquiry management and officer resource allocation.
- Annual maintenance budget management for revenue and capital.

- Tree contract management and monitoring to approximately 3-10% on a monthly basis.
- Managing and keeping up to date the council's tree web page.
- Providing first point of contact for out-of-hours tree emergencies, for which they are paid standby allowance.
- Community engagement through 'Tree Friends', 'Friends of Parks', Allotment Associations etc.
- Tree officers based in the planning department are responsible for:
 - Conservation Area (CA) tree works notification system and Tree Preservation Order (TPO) works application in relation to the Town & Country Planning Act 1990.
 - planning applications involving trees, hard & soft landscaping (including green walls & roofs);
 - tree-related enforcement cases under the Act and appeals;
 - high hedges complaints.

Outsourced tree planting and maintenance function

The outsourced tree planting and maintenance function involves (under direction from a tree officer) the following:

- A term tree contractor, usually on a term year contract for five or more years, with the option of a limited number of annual contract extensions.
- The contract functions on a schedule of rates for tree planting and maintenance works.
- The contractor carries out all the arboricultural tasks required, such as:
 - all types of tree work operations;
 - tree planting surveys for new street tree sites;
 - annual tree planting programme, and the associated young tree maintenance aftercare programme/s;
 - inspections for oak processionary moth, and if required eradication works;
 - inspections for massaria and remedial works.
- The contractor self-monitors 25% of completed tree works in line with their tendered 'Quality Assurance' policy.

Advantages and disadvantages of this model:

Advantages:

- Strategic control over the management of the council's tree stock by skilled tree officers, without any commercial influence.
- A professional interface with the borough's residents and Ward Councillors which positively influences the perception of a tree officer's role in the local community.
- The management of a tree database which is accurate, up-to-date and can inform budgetary management decisions and produce statistics for stakeholders.
- Species selection control for species diversification within the council's tree stock.

- Tree website management for public information about tree management in the borough, assisting a reduction in tree-related enquiries.
- Direct liaison with the council's call centre if applicable.
- Unbiased contract monitoring which can be subject to a rectification and default system if required.
- Liaison with client depts.
- Control of risk.

Disadvantages:

- The client function can be more prone to financial cuts as the model is not a contractual arrangement.
- The potential for a lack of efficiency in terms of an outsourced tree officer function, with scouting the work being carried out at tree inspection stage, which can be passed directly to the operatives carrying out the tree work.
- Risk of a poorly-performing tree contract that is adversarial and difficult to manage, consuming tree officer time.
- Potential cost of the internal client function
- Limited flexibility with internal client function staffing compared to outsourced client function.



CASE STUDY B: Commissioning

Introduction

This Local Authority has progressively been moving away from the 'traditional model'. As a result of various council wide changes over the last few years, it now operates a range of mechanisms to provide council services.

The commissioning model allows the council to take a flexible approach to shaping the future of the organisation, moving away from the traditional model of providing services in-house to a mixed economy provided via internal and external delivery units. A delivery unit may be in-house, i.e. provided by the council, or may be provided by an external or third-party provider.

Commissioning Group:

The council has 'Commissioning Group' at its centre, which commissions the delivery of services from 'Delivery Units' and manages contracts with service providers (e.g. PFI contracts). The Commissioning Group also includes those teams traditionally seen as part of the corporate centre of the organisation, such as Communications, Strategy, Insurance and Commercial Services.

Assurance:

- Corporate anti-fraud, governance and internal audit.
- Manages relationship with joint legal service.

Internal delivery units – there are several internal delivery units delivered directly by staff employed by the council. These units are:

- **Family Services.**
- **Adults and Communities.**
- **Street Scene.** This includes green spaces which has responsibility for council owned/maintained trees and parks and open spaces in the borough. Street Scene is overseen/managed by the Local Authority Trading Company, but its staff remain employed directly by the council.

External delivery units - there are also a number of strategic partners and joint ventures which deliver services on the council's behalf. These are:

- Outsourcing to an external commercial company of the council's back office and customer support services - finance, ICT, procurement, insight, customer service, HR (including payroll and pensions), revenues and benefits, estates and health and safety.
- Joint Venture between the council and the same commercial company to provide development and regulatory services to residents both within the borough and the wider South East - Planning and Development Management, Regeneration and Strategic Planning, Land Charges, Building Control, Highways, Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing, Cemetery and Crematorium.

- Partnering with a different external commercial company for the delivery of Education and Skills services, with staff transferring over to the company.

Local Authority Trading Company - Owned by the council, it is the parent company to the Housing arms' length management organisation and an adult social care company that provides services to adults with learning and physical disabilities.

Joint services – there are two main joint services, both delivered jointly with a neighbouring council:

- a shared service created by combining the legal teams of both councils, which also provides legal services to a third council;
- a shared public health service between the two councils.

Tree services - Delivery of borough's tree services are split between two separate delivery units, with staff employed by different organisations:

- Council owned/maintained trees are the responsibility of the Green Spaces team in Street Scene, who are directly employed by the council but overseen/managed by the local authority trading company.
- Trees in the context of planning are within the remit of the joint venture. Although most joint venture staff have the commercial company's employment contracts, because some statutory functions are subject of Local Authority formal delegation schemes a few officers have joint employment contracts (with both the commercial company and the council).



CASE STUDY C: Outsourced Staff mutual

Introduction

The tree services team is outsourced from the council (2015), along with the wider parks department, sports and leisure and bereavement services. This involves the setting up of a new body that employs staff directly and offers tree services to the council. The aim is for this new body to provide cost savings by becoming more efficient whilst providing the same services to the council. These services include the management of all council trees on highways, in parks, housing sites, cemeteries and schools. It also includes receiving and processing all TPO and Conservation Area tree works applications, and providing consultations to the planning department for development sites. This is with the understanding that this body will have to compete on the open market to provide these services in due course, once it has come to an end of an agreed period to establish itself.

Staff engagement

Existing staff take part in a consultation process and this staff mutual proposal is put to a vote, with the commitment given that existing staff would have their pay and conditions protected under TUPE arrangements. The alternative option is presented where services would remain within the council and teams would be subject to an internal market testing exercise. This process has taken place in other council departments and has resulted in cuts and job losses. Staff can take part in working groups and presentations to decide on the name of the new body, its values and how it is presented to the wider public.

Identity

The new body is set up with a senior management board, with the aim of gaining charitable status. Trustees are appointed with the relevant skills and experience to contribute to the new body. Working groups are formed to decide on key areas such as human resources and IT. A staff council is set up to provide representation of staff views to senior managers and facilitate communication up and down the organisational structure. A new website is launched.

Efficiencies

Once set up, the new body is able to source services from other suppliers rather than being tied to the council (e.g. IT). New staff are employed on pay and conditions that are more in line with those found in the private sector. Opportunities for new income streams can be explored.

CASE STUDY D: Fully-managed outsourced service

Introduction

The following outsourcing model has been in operation servicing a London borough since 2011 following the award of a contract for the provision of arboricultural works and arboricultural services to a large specialist arboricultural contracting company (the Company).

As well as carrying out all aspects of practical tree work the Company also provides full client function with the provision of four FTEs: two tree officers, one surveyor and one administration officer (TUPE'd from the Local Authority).

Tree strategy

Prior to the tendering process the borough adopted a comprehensive tree strategy in order to set out its vision in terms of arboricultural management and public expectations.

Operation

Previously the Borough kept paper records of its tree stock. The first task of the company was to quantify the entire tree stock electronically through full asset survey using Ezytreev. This has enabled them to identify risk associated trees and formulate a cyclical programme for remedial works.

The tree officers deal with resident enquires, issue works and tree reports on subsidence and direct damage for the insurance section. The company currently surveys the authority's tree stock on a five-yearly cycle which includes all highways, parks and open spaces as well as the housing stock which is run by a third party organisation. There are three tree gangs dedicated to the borough carrying out tree works servicing the five year programmed cycle.

The main requirements of this contract are:

- Act in the interest of the borough.
- Provide arboricultural consultancy service to third party housing company.
- Carry out a full tree asset survey.
- Manage the tree stock in line with the tree strategy.
- Manage operation functions.
- Deliver the entire service within agreed budgets.
- Manage customer enquiries within agreed timescales.
- Deal with all tree-related subsidence claims.
- Organise routine and ad-hoc works.
- Provide 24 hour emergency call out service.
- Liaise with various stakeholders.

Community engagement

The officers also attend residents' forums to explain the tree strategy of the Local Authority and as to why trees are felled, pruned and planted.

Monitoring and performance

The Company carries out self-monitoring at a level of 10% (the Borough no longer directly employs an arboricultural specialist monitoring quality or performance).

The Key Performance Indicators of the contract include:

- Provide a fully managed customer service operation.
- Updating the council website (indirectly).
- Attendance at meetings with other council service areas.
- Meet the 95% green waste recycling target.
- Manage all enquiries and emails within service level agreements.
- Manage insurance claims.

NB There is no stipulation in the KPIs relating to mandatory tree planting targets, however the Company has a policy of planting one tree for every tree it removes.*





London Tree Officers Association

The London Tree Officers Association
www.ltoa.org.uk